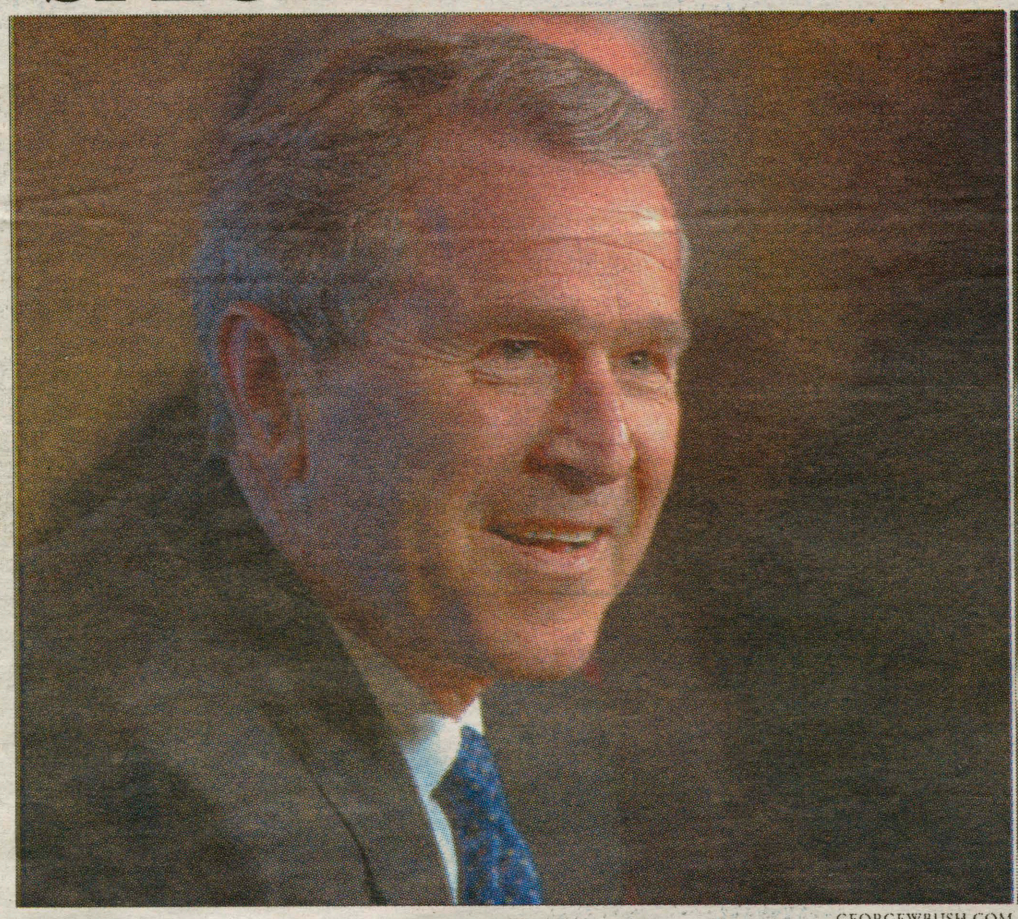
Volume XXXXV Number 8
A Hamilton College Student Publication, Clinton, NY
October 29, 2004

The Spectator

"Older than the Republican Party"

SPECIAL EDITION ELECTION COVERAGE



GEORGEWBUSH.COM

JOHNKERRY.COM

Americans to take to the polls on Tuesday

Presidential election too close to call, experts say

by Sarah Gould '05
ELECTION CONTRIBUTOR

In what is being billed as one of the most highly anticipated political contests of that last several decades, the general election for the new President of the United States is set to take place on November 2. President George W. Bush, vying for a second term in office, and Senator John F. Kerry, D-Mass, are in a statistical dead-heat according to the most recent polls, leaving Ralph Nader trailing far behind in percentage points.

The months leading up to the election have proven turbulent. Both parties, Republican and Democratic, are engaged in political warfare, tossing attacks and counterattacks at one another. Still, the candidates are neck and neck, making their last pushes for support in the important swing states across the nation.

Kerry, echoing the sentiments he has maintained throughout his bid for the presidency, remarked in Pueblo, Colorado on Saturday that "what we need in America [is] a president of the United States who can do more than one thing at the same time." Kerry has cited deficits in nearly every aspect of Bush's tenure in office.

Currently, the Senator and the President are embroiled in a heated attack/counterattack concerning the issue of 380 tons of missing explosives in Iraq. The President had formerly taken a silent stand in response to Kerry's accusations that he and his administration were purposely trying to avoid the issue. Bush finally spoke out Wednesday, denying any avoidance of responsibility. He countered his opponent's remarks with accusations that Kerry had conveniently forgotten that missing explosives were precisely part of the reason for the United States' involvement in war.

The atmosphere of accusatory exchanges extends into nearly every political territory, perhaps most obviously in the realm of national security and the "War on Terror." James S. Sherman Associate Professor of Government Phillip Klinkner predicts that the election may come down to one issue: Which of the two candidates will make the country safer.

"There are two competing visions about the war on terror and [the question] is which of those two competing visions will make the country safer," said Klinkner.

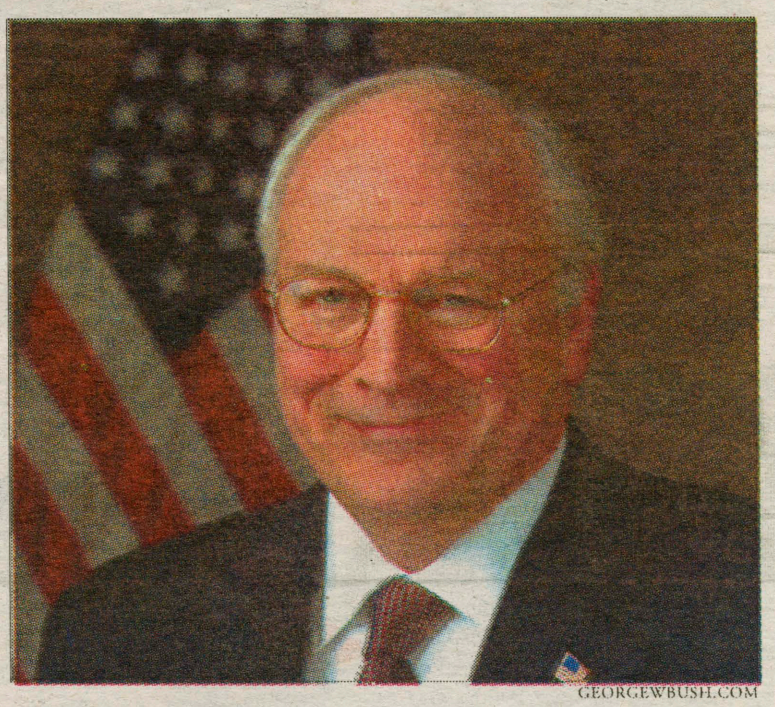
Kerry's campaign asserts that "our leadership has walked away from more than a century of American leadership in the world to embrace a new - and dangerously ineffective - American disregard for the world." Senator Kerry's revamped policies concerning national security are centered around four fundamental points. In simplest terms, the Senator hopes to re-establish global international alliances, transform the U.S. Military into a force better prepared to confront modern threats, utilize all aspects of the American defense arsenal, and disentangle the U.S. from its dependency on Mideast oil.

In recent months, and even extending back over the last three years, the President's record concerning national security has come under intense scrutiny. Although Bush maintains steadfast confidence in his decisions and handling of the events after September 11, 2001 and through the most current conflicts (resistance by Iraqi insurgents and questions still lingering about the validity of Bush's motivations for entering into war,) his proactive policy-institutions have been subject to much criticism.

The American Civil Liberties Union cites the Patriot Act as a grievous example of the Bush Administration's infringement on personal rights. In an analysis of the Act, also known as the "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003, the ACLU states that it, "grants sweeping powers to the government, eliminating or weakening many of the checks and balances that remained on government surveillance, wiretapping, detention and criminal prosecution even after passage of the USA Patriot Act in 2001." Kerry's team rode in on the coattails of these types of criticisms, using them to enhance his argument that "this president keeps going around the country

see Election, page 5

JOHNKERRY.COM



GEORGEWBUSH.COM

Vice Presidential candidates SenatorEdwards and Vice President Cheney have been prominent on the campaign trail.

Election heats up at HC

by Emily Lemanczyk '05
FEATURES DDITOR

Debates surrounding the upcoming presidential election keep heating up at Hamilton College, and the election has played an integral part in shaping the campus activities, lectures and overall sentiment so far this semester. Students and faculty alike have been talking about the key election issues in and out of the classroom . The prevalence of political decals, posters, and signs on campus and in parking lots on the hill show how many students, administrators, and faculty members truly care about the upcoming election.

Hamilton students have been quite active this election season, participating in Think Tanks, watching the presidential debates and registering to vote. Additionally, student organizations, and particularly public affairs organizations, have been incredibly involved on campus since the beginning of the semester. These groups, including the HC Republicans and HC Democrats, have been helping students become more aware of the election's key issues, informing students where the candidates stand, and most importantly, helping first-time voters register.

The Hamilton College Democrats have spearheaded the crusade to mobilize student voters, as the group has helped hundreds of students register to vote in the upcoming election. Throughout this semester, the Hamilton College Dems have set up tables in Beinecke to help students with the registration process, answering any questions students may have about voting locally versus absentee balloting. The club has also helped to mobilize voters in the local Clinton community, as well as educate students via flyers and dittos about the two candidates and where they stand regarding domestic and international issues.

Other campus groups, such as the Hamilton Republicans, have been actively engaging in election activities as well. According to Dana Martin, the president of the Hamilton College Republicans, the group has been helping promote Bush locally, and has also been helping students with the voter registration process.

Even though the election season is quickly coming to a close and many students have already made up their minds about the election, student groups and organizations are working hard to keep the ball rolling and maintain students' interest in the election.

The Levitt Center has been hosting an event called "Speakers Avenue." Modeled after the free-speech mecca, Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, London, this special edition Think Tank allows members of the Hamilton community to "speak their mind about a political issue surrounding this year's Presidential election," according to Sharon Topi, the administrator of the Levitt Center. The last installment of this special Think Tank will take place on Monday, November 1, on Martin's Way from 12-1 pm. (In the event of rain, the event will take place in the McEwan/KJ Breezeway). Students have five minutes to stand on their "soapbox" and speak their mind about any issue pertaining to the eiection. All members of the community are welcome to attend.

With all this pre-election activity, what are students going to be doing on the big night?

The Levitt Center will be hosting an election party in the Little Pub on the evening of the election; drinks and snacks will be provided. The Hamilton College Republicans will also be hosting an election party in the Hub from 7-9 pm. Additionally, the Womyn's Center, the Hamilton College Democrats, VOX, SASA, and the Rainbow Alliance are teaming up to host an election party in the Womyn's Center.

Although some students may opt to stay in their rooms or in their dorms "to do work," many students will likely be watching the live election telecast on Tuesday night. Many RA's are hoping to organize dorm "election parties" in their lounges. As Tuesday nears, more details about these and other election parties on campus will be announced.

Republicans, Dems parrot pres. debate

by Emma Furman '07
NEWS EDITOR

Hamilton has seen a definitive increase in interest in politics among members of the student body, as everyone's attention is turning to the rapidly approaching election. This peaked presidential interest has been reflected in recent campus activities, including a proxy presidential debate that was held this past Wednesday evening by the Hamilton College Democrats and the Hamilton College Republicans.

Hamilton College Democrats and Hamilton College Republicans went head - to - head in the second campus debate, mirroring the recent televised presidential debates.

The debate was held by these two clubs, and sponsored by Student Assembly. Its organization was in the hands of Paul Bleirberg '06, who said that the decision to hold this particular style of mock presidential debate took place last spring, when the two clubs "decided...that we would do a Democrat/Republican proxy event."

Each club chose four members to present the point of view of their respective candidates. O'Shea was chosen by her club to represent Senator John Kerry's point of view in the debate along with Daniel Bleeker '06, Grace Dobbyn '08 and Michael Mortimer '07. The Republican side of the debate was comprised of the Hamilton College Republicans' President, Dana Martin '06, Joseph Jansen '07, John Pearson '05, and Jonathan Waclawski '05.

The debate was supposed to be moderated by James S. Sherman Associate Professor of Government Philip Kinkner. However, Assistant Professor of Government Robert Martin took over as moderator at the last minute for him. According to Martin, he became involved with the debate as of "Tuesday night when Prof. Kinkner asked me to replace him, since he would not be able to attend due to a personal family matter."

Martin asked four previously chosen questions of the eight participants in the debate. Also according to Martin, the topics for the questions were published and announced prior to the event, however, he "composed the question himself Wednesday morning, and no one but [himself] knew what they were prior to the public debate."

The first question pertained to the conflict in Iraq, and it was decided that the Democrats would be first to answer it by a coin toss. The Democrats had two minutes to discuss what their "candidate [has] said and/or done correctly in the past regarding Iraq?" Dobbyn argued for the Democrats that "President Bush has led a misguided war."

The Republicans then had 2 minutes to respond, during which Janson countered that the war was not misguided, and that President Bush had to confront threats in a "different way."

Each side was then allowed a 60 second rebuttal , during which Mortimer eloquently argued for the Democrats that "Al Qaeda attacked us on 9/11, not Iraq. Saddam Hussein posed no threat to Americans before they attacked Baghdad."

The same format was followed throughout the debate for each question asked, alternating between who answered first.

For the next question, Martin asked "What kind of judge would your candidate nominate [to fill a potential Supreme Court vacancy] and why does that demonstrate the correct approach?"

O'Shea argued for the Democrats that Kerry's nominations would "be more likely to support things like...women's right to choose and equal rights for women," while Bush's federal court nominees in the past have had little tolerance for women's right to choose. The Republicans did not directly contradict this, and instead chose to argue that Bush would "nominate a strict constructionalist" who would interpret the constitution, "the backbone of society as we know it," as it was written and intended to be.

Martin's last question of the debate was "What is your candidate's position on the amendment issue and why is that the best approach on this divisive issue?"

Bleeker argued for the Democrats that John Kerry is a "man of tolerance," and would not "write discrimination into the Constitution," considering that the "very foundation of American society [is the] belief that all men and woman are created equal."

The Republicans countered that George Bush believes marriage should be between a man and a woman, to which Bleeker responded that Kerry's personal belief was the same, but he doesn't believe he has the power to make such a personal decision for all Americans. He closed his argument by stating that "no amendment in the history of the U.S. has ever been written [aside from Prohibition] to remove rights from citizens."

Professors reflect on past elections

by Greta Rosenberger '07
NEWS EDITOR

In the months leading up to the presidential election, many students have expressed the sentiment that this election is the most important in American history. Nevertheless, political activity on college campuses does not rival the rallies and riots of the 1960's and 70s. That being so, many professors on the Hill responded to the question "what was the political climate like on your college's campus during an election, and did your fellow students seem more involved than Hamilton students?"

Edmund A. Lefere Professor of English John O'Neill stated that at the beginning of his college years, students were thought to be apathetic about politics. "I remember one of my professors telling me and some friends that we should be more like the Japanese students, who had rioted when President Eisenhower was scheduled to visit Japan, so that the presidential visit was cancelled," he said. "My professor's wish came true, with a vengeance - students in the late 1960's and early 1970's were more political than any students have been since."

Professor of Anthropology Douglas Raybeck spoke of his personal involvement with campus politics. "When I was an undergraduate in the early 60's students were generally disengaged (see Animal House), but a few years later with the knowledge that they could be sent to die in Vietnam, students gained an increased appreciation of the political process," said Raybeck. "By that point, they were more involved than students today and were largely responsible for Johnson's decision not to seek a second term."

Political activisim was also a large part of Professor of classics Barbara Gold's college experience. "First time I voted was (in college) for Johnson... I became an activist after that, and worked for Hubert Humphrey in 1968, then worked hard for McGovern in 1972. Those were exciting, volatile and violent times. When I was in grad school in 1968, during the war, I spent time protesting with the striking cafeteria workers at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and got into serious trouble for missing one of my graduate seminars. My old professors who told me that "the reason we went into Classics was because we do not care about modern life and politics!"

The Vietnam War seems to have been a large aspect of the devotion past students had to participating in electoral activities, but aren't we involved in a war right now? Elias W. Leavenworth Professor of Economics James Bradfield compared the campaigns in his response. "I see little difference between that campaign and the current one. The campaigns during the Vietnam War were a different story. I recall the presence of National Guard troops and tear gas on the campus," he said.

Professor of History Maurice Isserman also touched on this question with his response: "The two wars are similar in the way they were sold to the American public (the President lied) and in their likely outcome (endless bloody stalemate). The difference between Vietnam in 1968 and Iraq in 2004 was in the scale of fighting (in one two week period in January 1968, the United States lost as many killed in Vietnam as the total thus far killed in a year and a half of combat in Iraq.) The other difference was that 18-year-olds were being drafted and sent

*see **Professors**, page 3*

War on Terror: top election issue for students

by Katie Childs '08
ASSISTANT FEATURES EDITOR

Of the 24 million young Americans aged 18-24 who were eligible to vote in the 2000 election, only 8 million took advantage of this privilege. After months of presidential campaigning, voters know where the candidates stand on the issues, but with the 2004 Presidential Election only a few days away, voter turnout is the biggest unknown left in this election year. 18-24 year olds account for a significant voting block, forcing the candidates to focus on issues that matter to young voters. But what issues are significant to our generation, whose members have seen terrorism and a war, and who could see the institution of a draft, the privatization of social securit and the repletion of Roe V. Wade in the upcoming years?

"Domestic policy is the most important to me," said Ashley Kuitunen '08. Kuitunen, who voted for Kerry, has been sure of her choice for months. "Mostly just the war as well; it turned me away from a candidate."

The war in Iraq is weighing heavily on voters' minds during this election year. "The war in Iraq is probably the most important issue for voters," said Sandy Webb '05; Webb, a resident of Massachusetts, has cast his votes for Kerry. "I don't think the President has a plan without instituting the draft. I don't think it's the right way to go."

Liz Purchia '06 also sees the war as an important issue: "Well, the war obviously is the big issue; putting a stop to it. Also important is our economy and our reputation worldwide." Purchia believes that abortion and education are also key issues for young voters because these issues directly affect "our generation."

Stephanie Wolter '07, a Republican, feels there is a dominant issue in this campaign: "The most important issue is probably the war in Iraq. I wouldn't say it was the only thing I voted on, but it was a factor."

For other voters, this election year is not about issues but about loyalty to one's party. "I voted by party," said Heather Michael '07, a Republican. "It's pretty much just party line. I'm a big fan of lower taxes. It's a lot more that I don't like Kerry than that I like Bush."

Some voters would contend that the coverage of the war in Iraq dwarfs the other issues in the campaign, leaving voters in the dark on the candidates' stances. "To voters, the most important issue is defense, but I think that's bullshit," said Sean Tice '06. "If you make people fear enough, they forget the domestic things which are really the big problems." Tice, a Democrat, believes that for most voters health care and job security are the key issues in this election year. "I'm a Democrat. Unfortunately, I don't think Kerry is a strong candidate to put up against Bush, but he's not Bush."

Tice believes that there other issues that will influence voters during this election year: "It seems like one of the bigger issues is that people don't want to switch presidents during wartime. I just read an article that said that the soldiers in Iraq are still pro-Bush even if they don't support his policies."

Another key issue in this election year is abortion, according to Wendy Doster '08. "Abortion has influenced me the most. The government should not be allowed to dictate that," said Doster, who supports Kerry.

MacKenzie Ross '08 hails from Florida, a battleground state in this election, and also places weight on the issue of abortion: "I guess women's rights in general are most important. Broad, I know, but the whole abortion issue." The candidates' positions on this topic caused Ross to vote for Kerry.

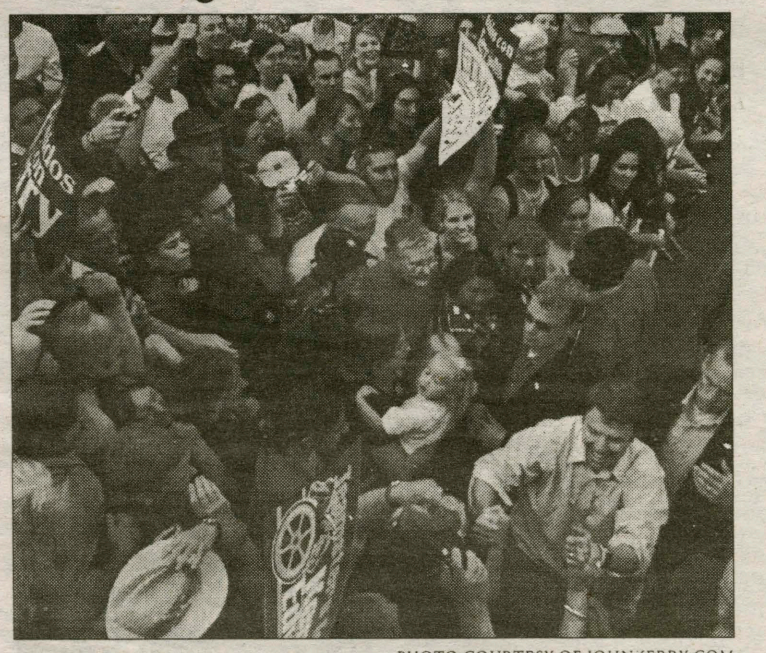


PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHNKERRY.COM

John Edwards campaigns to swing voters.

Emery Chapman '08 supports Bush: "I think Bush has handled the war properly. I'm also voting for Bush because he is pro-life and I think abortion is murder." Chapman believes that most young voters are voting on one issue: "I think they're all basically voting on the war."

MTV and Rock the Vote teamed up during this election season to help young Americans register to vote; their campaign was titled "Choose or Lose: Twenty Million Loud" with the intention of creating a significant turnout of voters aged 18-24. In an election year where so much is at stake and the race is so tight, the turnout of young voters and the issues that are pertinent to them will be a deciding factor in who moves into the White House for the next four years.

College surveys show strong support for Kerry

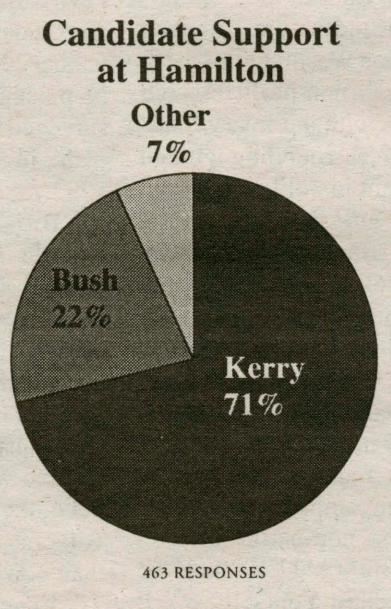
by Tim Foley '06
BUSINESS & ECONOMICS EDITOR

Among college undergraduates, Hamilton College and Harvard University surveys confirm Senator John Kerry's lead over President George Bush. Hamilton's survey, conducted by members of a statistics course, finds 71% of Hamilton College students favor Kerry while 22% support Bush. Harvard's Institute of Politics shows Kerry's lead to be a more modest 52% to 39%.

Members of an economic statistics course at Hamilton College received 463 responses from a survey sent to the entire student body. Students were asked to identify themselves by a number of factors including sex, race, academic concentration and household income.

79% of Hamilton's female students claim to support Kerry while only 15% favor Bush. Harvard's study finds that nationally, women are leaning toward the Democratic candidate, but not by 64 percentage points. 58% of female undergraduates across the country back Kerry while Bush is supported by 34%. Indeed, Kerry owes much gratitude to his female constituents, as Harvard's poll finds, Kerry's lead among college students emerged almost entirely from his support among women voters.

In 2000, Vice President Al Gore carried the female vote as well, but the effect was offset by Bush's strong lead in male voters. 2004 is a different situation. Hamilton's male students favor the senator by a narrower margin than the women, yet 59% still support Kerry while 31% think Bush should return to the White House. However, national trends tell a slightly different tale. Harvard's poll shows Kerry's lead among male undergraduates to be just 1%.



Nationally, Harvard's poll shows undergraduates are most concerned with the national economy, with 42% naming it as the most important issue. Hamilton's survey asked students to designate each issue a score of 1 through 5, with 5 being the most imperative. On average, Hamilton students agree with national trends, indicating the economy as the election's prevalent concern. Also on the mind of Hamilton students are civil rights and the war on terror, both closely trailing the economy's top ranking.

Across income classifications, Hamiltonians are marginally divided. Every income group chose Kerry by a significant margin, the largest of which was in the $30-50 thousand per year income range where Kerry leads Bush by 61 percentage points. This range also proves to be the strongest proportional supporters of Kerry, as 75% believe he belongs in the Oval Office. The tightest margin, though still not a contest, shows up in those students whose household incomes are greater than $150 thousand per year: 26% support Bush, his best showing through all the income groups, and Kerry managed to grab 72%. President Bush's lowest support level, 10%, was dealt by those students whose household income is less than $30 thousand per year.

Kerry's lead also spans all racial classifications. Bush's highest support level was among Hamilton students of Asian and Pacific Island decent at 26%. 87.5% of African American students and 100% of Latino students polled favor John Kerry. 71% of Caucasian students polled back the Democrat, while Bush draws 23% of Hamilton's largest ethnic group.

Harvard's poll also concentrated on voter sentiment and contrasted this election with the election of 2000. In the spring of 2000, 50% of college students indicated they would definitely vote in the upcoming election. Harvard's most recent survey, taken in October of this year, shows an astonishing 84% of college students definitely intend to vote. In the 2000 election, only 42% of students voted. Retaining this proportion, 72% of college students will likely come to the polls for this year's election; an encouraging sign of political awareness among young Americans. On the same note, Harvard's survey showed that 87% of current college students believe politics are relevant to their lives right now. This statistic, up 19 points from 2000, exemplifies the pattern of increased political activity and awareness among college students.

"Focus on politics"

*from **Professors**, page 2*

to Vietnam, and my own 18th birthday was drawing perilously near."

Perhaps the college atmosphere during elections in the Vietnam era would have been more similar to the current one had there been no war involved. Professor of Comparative Literature Peter Rabinowitz claims that not all the election vigor was a result of politics. "As the late sixties rolled along, the political atmosphere was a lot hotter than it is here. But not all that much energy was devoted specifically to elections—the demonstrations against the war in Vietnam were far broader than that, and covered a much longer time period."

According to Professor Klinkner, "It doesn't really matter what the politics were like when I was in college. Students shouldn't influenced one way or another by the nostalgia trips of aging professors," he stated. "They certainly shouldn't feel as they missed out on some sort of golden age of student political participation. Students should focus on politics as they see it."

CO amendment seeks to change electoral process

by Britten Chase '05
I&I EDITOR

The debate over the merits of the Electoral College has raged since the 2000 presidential election. Some prefer a popular vote over the Electoral system, saying that those that vote in states that are solidly for one candidate never get their vote to count toward the candidate of their choice. While not much has been done on this issue on a national scale, the state of Colorado has proposed an initiative that would change the way it counts its electoral votes.

Coloradans will hit the polls on November 2, and among other decisions, they will vote on Amendment 36; a bill that would make Colorado the third state (after Nebraska and Maine) to divide up its nine electoral votes based on the popular vote instead of on a winner-take-all basis. The state would divide up its 7 congressional electoral votes in proportion to the popular vote. The two senatorial electoral votes would be awarded to the candidate that won the statewide popular vote. Rather than have 9 votes go to the winner of the state, Colorado would most likely give six votes to the winning candidate (typically Republican) and three votes to the other (typically Democrat).

Proponents of the amendment believe they have found the answer in solving the apathetic voter crisis. Supporters believe that a person is more likely to go to the polls if they realize that their vote will help their candidate get elected rather than be lost due to the fact that the state voted overwhelmingly for the other candidate. This will also allow Colorado's electoral votes to reflect the true views of the population rather than make it a state that fully supports or fully rejects a candidate.

However, the amendment has long uphill battle ahead of it. Both major Denver newspapers have decided not to endorse it. The Denver Post has come out against the amendment, saying, "If the measure is approved, Colorado could lose political relevance as presidential candidates come to realize that there is so little at stake in Colorado. It wouldn't be worth a candidate's time to campaign here and to speak to Colorado concerns if the best result would ba one electoral vote advantage."

It is all fun and games until someone loses an eye. Or an election. Supporters of the bill constantly remind voters that had this system been in place last election, three votes would have gone toward former presidential candidate Al Gore; enough votes to change the results of that election.

As of October 20, Amendment 36 was opposed by 49% of the population with only 35% in support. Defeat is predicted for this amendment, but the point has been made: People want their votes to count, and the current Electoral College system may not be the best or the only way to achieve that goal.

A Tale of Two States

If Amendment 36 passes, Colorado will become the third state to split electoral votes.

In 1969, Maine passed an amendment changing the electoral process in the state. The candidate with the most statewide votes, gains two electoral votes; in addition, Maine's two congressional districts each give out a vote to the winner of their district.

Nebraska followed Maine's lead in 1991, enacting an amendment that splits its five electoral votes. The statewide winner of the election receives two electoral votes; the remaining three votes are given out to the top winner of each congressional district.

Will young voters rock the 2004 vote?

by Kathleen McGrory '05
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Will young voters really rock the 2004 vote? Despite the recent explosion of media coverage regarding the importance of the youth vote in this year's election, officials say it is too early to tell.

Experts say that young Americans, the largest demographic of independent voters, have the potential to alter the course of the Presidential race. As a result, efforts to mobilize the youth vote have been stronger than ever before.

But has registration among young voters been on the rise? According to the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC), evidence won't exist until after the election when registration has ended in all states. Even in New York State where the registration period has ended, the Board of Elections won't issue its registered voter statistics until later this week.

"Everything I have heard, both anecdotally in the press and from talking to registration officials suggests that more young people are registering to vote," said Brian Hancock, a spokesman for the EAC. "But in all truth, we won't have those numbers until after the election."

Curtis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, a Washington-based, non-partisan, non-profit research institution with a primary focus on issues surrounding citizen engagement in politics, agrees.

"My gut says that young people's turn-out, especially those in college, will be as high as or higher than it was in 1992, when youth voter turn-out broke records," said Gans.

What is clear, however, is that more money is being spent on youth mobilization efforts. During the campaign season, the six largest non-partisan youth vote efforts – MTV's Rock the Vote, Declare Yourself, WWE Smackdown Your Vote!, The New Voter Project and the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network – have together devoted over $40 million dollars to mobilize the youth vote.

Groups that seek to empower voters – both partisan and non-partisan – are not new to the American political scene. Neither are groups that seek to empower young voters. Rock the Vote, for example, was founded by members of the recording industry in 1990.

COURTESY OF JOHNKERRY.COM

The Kerry-Edwards Campaign has focused on courting the youth vote, said Professor Klinkner.

But after the close-call election of 2000, many groups boosted their efforts – and funds – to inspire Americans to vote. Groups targeting young voters are no exception. Many of these organizations are confident that their hard work will pay-off.

One such non-partisan organization, the New Voter Project has already registered nearly 350,000 new voters in the swing statres alone.

New data released by the Pew Research Center supports Alexander's conclusion. A September 2004 report indicates that 58 percent of young Americans surveyed were registered to vote – the highest percentage since 1992.

But in Hamilton's own Oneida County, Republican Commissioner Patti DiSpirito has not seen an abnormally large influx of new voters between the ages of 18 and 24 this year. Although a larger-than-usual group of county residents has registered to vote for the first time in 2004, the number of new young voters is comparable if not less than new voters aged 40-59.

"The 18-24 age group was not the age group that dominated this registration," said Dispirito. "We haven't seen many more new young voters than we have in past years."

In addition to registration, many groups are also working towards encouraging young voters to turn-up at the polls. Having already registered 1.2 million new voters, Rock the Vote is doing just that.

"Come November, our goal is to get 20 million young people to the polls," said Cate Brandon, a spokeswoman for Rock the Vote. "If we succeed, two million more young people will vote in 2004 than voted in 2000."

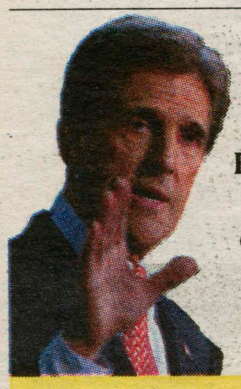
Recent actions by presidential candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry suggest that politicians have taken note of this possibility. Kerry, for example, was recently a guest on both The Late Show with David Letterman and The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, two television shows that appeal to younger viewers. Bush has included a blog written by his teenage daughters Jenna and Barbara on his website.

Associate Professor of Government Philip Klinkner has observed this trend, especially in terms of the Democratic candidates. "Young people, especially college-educated young people seem to be going pretty strongly for Kerry, so the Dems are doing everything they can to turn them out on Nov. 2," he said.

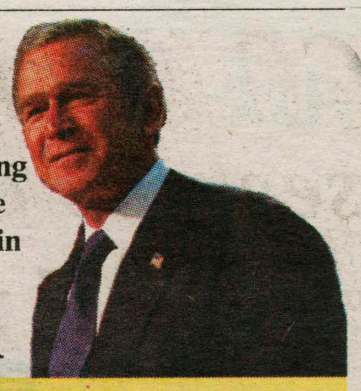
What will happen if significantly more youths turn up at the polls than in the past? Klinkner predicts it could change the outcome of the election."There's always a lot of hyperbole about the importance of youth voters, but this time I actually think it is real," said Klinkner. "The election is very close and people seem to be voting pretty much as they did in 2000.º Since young voters have had the lowest rates of turnout, if they show up in the polls in larger numbers they could swing the election."

Gender Gap

While polls show a general trend towards Senator Kerry is found among students on the Hill, there is a gender gap among Bush and Kerry supporters. Hamilton's female students are more supportive of Kerry than male students, with 79% of those polled indicating that they will vote for the Senator, while only 59% of Hamilton men polled will cast votes for Kerry. More male students than female students wll vote for Bush; of those polled, 31% of men and 15% of women will vote for the current president.



Candidate Comparison



COMPILED BY ALEXANDRA SEAR '05 AND BRITTEN CHASE '05, FROM JOHNKERRY.COM AND GEORGEWBUSH.COM

For months, the candidates have been talking to the media, appearing in ads, meeting voters and debating the issues, but with all this talk, figuring out their specific positions can sometimes be difficult. Use the chart below to see how Bush and Kerry compare when it comes down to just the facts on the top issues in the 2004 election.

	Kerry	Bush
Environment	Against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, plans to fund research for alternative fuel technologies, reinstate parts of the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions, restore Superfund allocations, and ban logging in old-growth forests.	In favor of limited oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, working on the Clear Skies initiative to reduce power plant emissions as well as the Clean Interstate Act to reduce auto emissions; proposes $4 billion in tax incentives to encourage cleaner sources of energy.
Gay Marriage	Against constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage; leaves decision to individual states.	For a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.
Homeland Security	Heighten security at airports and borders but not at the expense of civil rights; will increase security at chemical plants and instate a Director of National Intelligence (aka, "Intelligence Czar").	Wants to create a National Intelligence director (aka "Intelligence Czar"), will create a National counterterrorism central office, will restructure the military to focus on the war on terror rather than existing models from the Cold War, build and add to the Patriot Act.
War on Terror	Rely on diplomacy, economic, as well as military power to fight terrorism; improve intelligence sharing; fund and equip first responders; imporove port security; and modernize military.	Continue to keep US forces in iraq, establish Iraqi elections, continue Bush doctrine: encourage allies to aid in Middle Eastern issue but willing to have the US act alone.
Taxes	Repeal Bush's tax cut for the wealthiest 2% of Americans; cut taxes on the middle class.	Will work to make his 2001 tax cuts permanent, will also work to simplfy the tax system and tax code.
Stem Cell Research	Lift the ban imposed by the Bush administration on researching on new stem cell lines.	Against expanding stem cell research, encouraging ban on using additional embryos but will continue research on existing stem cell lines.
Health Care	Cut family premiums, provide health care to every child, reduce cost of prescription drugs, especially to seniors, by increasing the amount of drugs imported from Canada.	Expand medicare eligibility; encourage drug price competition among American drug companies, create Health Savings Accounts for people to manage their own health care; encourage community health centers in rural areas.
Social Security	Not in favor of privatizing social security; working on a plan to fix the current system.	Encourages privatizing social security, will not change current benefits to seniors.

Presidential race is down to the wire

*from **National**, page 1*

trying to scare people."

Although Kerry supported a resolution permitting President Bush to go to war against Iraq, the Senator later explained that he was under the impression of faulty intelligence and that war would only come as a last resort. "Kerry gave the President the right to go war hoping that it would be used as a bargaining tool against Sadaam Hussein," explained Dan Bleeker, a member of the Hamilton College Democrats.

Education is also on the minds of all three candidates, though Bush and Kerry have both been vocal about the other's past reforms and plans for change. Kerry and a large percentage of the Democratic Party find fault in Bush's "No Child Left Behind Act," signed in 2002, which required that all states have plans to ensure that all students are meeting certain standards in reading and math. Disparate gaps between students of different socio-economic backgrounds are targeted and reading plans have been instituted in an effort to make sure all students are reading on grade level by the time they leave the third grade.

Democrats have criticized the NCLB Act, saying that the allocated funding is inadequate and insufficient. Kerry proposes a $27 billion addition to the Act and a $200 billion education trust fund. Bush's retorts stress the fact that all 50 states have agreed to accountability plans under NCLB. Jay Waclawski '05 of the Hamilton College Republicans explains that, "[The Democrats'] biggest contention with the No Child Left Behind Act is a lack of funding to properly install the mandates that government has put on the states. They're saying that teachers don't have the resources and incentives to carry the plan out. But, the mandates in and of themselves are the important part of the act. There need to be regulations in place to ensure high quality education."

"There are two competing visions about the war on terror and [the question] is which of those two competing visions will make the country safer."
— Professor Klinkner, on the varying campaign platforms

The issues range from disputes over the parameters of abortion to vastly different outlooks on the economy. If elected, Kerry vows to cut the deficit in half by the end of his first term. His taxation plan would primarily target those making more than $200,000 annually, while promising not to raise taxes for people earning less. Bush has signed tax cuts every year during his term and believes that those cuts aided the country in overcoming recession. The candidates' stances on the environment, foreign policy, and health care are reminiscent of opposite sides of one coin.

Predictions as to how the election will actually unfold are varied. On one hand, events could unfold smoothly in a clear correction of the conflicts surrounding the 2000 Presidential Election. On the other hand, Waclawski posits that, "given the preparation on both sides in terms of acquiring lawyers and money for a legal fund, there is a prediction that something will arise. Given all that, it's difficult to see a clear victor on November 2."

Ask the Experts...

"As I write this (Monday AM) the polls are tied, but I'm picking up two things. First, what momentum there is in the race, and there's not much, seems to be going Kerry's way. Second, Bush has a hard time breaking 50 percent in the national polls or in the polls of key battleground states. Given that incumbents below 50% are usually in trouble, I'll say that Kerry has a narrow advantage right now, but that could easily be lost over the next 8 days. Nonetheless, I'll call the election for Kerry with +2 in the popular vote and about 279 electoral college votes." ***Phil Klinkner, James S. Sherman Associate Professor of Government***

"As the presidential race comes down to the wire, I think that the National polls will continue to show no clear leader. Because of Kerry's record in the senate, the worst attendance of any senator this year, and voting in favor of many issues which he how opposes I think that President Bush will win the election. The states that are going to decide the election, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania are going to be incredibly close but, because of the President's strong leadership during the war in Iraq and against terrorism, Bush will be reelected. 270 Bush -268 Kerry." ***Dana Martin '06, President of the Hamilton College Republicans***

"Right now, a lot of the polls and electoral math seem to indicate that Bush is going to win, but I think there could be a lot of surprises on Election Day. First of all, many of the polls which show Bush leading in swing states are actually statistical dead heats and could break either way. Not to mention that these "likely voter" pollstend to underrepresent newly registered voters, minorities, the poor, and young people. I definitely think that young voters, in particular, are going to have a huge impact on this election. College students and other young people aren't the politically apathetic group we used to be. We're ready to have our voices heard, and there's every indication that the majority of us are behind John Kerry. Besides, the Nickelodeon "Kids Vote" poll (which has succesfully predicted the last four presidential elections) has Kerry winning with 57% - and in this crazy election, I'm as likely to believe the people who make "SpongeBob" as anyone else. Kerry: 276 Bush: 262." ***Caroline O'Shea '07, President of the Hamilton College Democrats***

"Final tally: Bush 271, Kerry 267. America is for the little (wo)man so ideally the election would come down to an enthralling showdown in Hawaii. Although Hawaiian voters are split evenly between Kerry and Bush in recent polling, that swing state will go to the democrats, as it traditionally has. Of the dozen swing states, the ones to look out for on election day are Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and, of course, Florida. Michigan will go Kerry. Assuming that one takes Minnesota and the other Wisconsin, Florida will be the state to win... which will go Bush. In any other scenario, however, the union support for Bush in PA will be crucial to for Kerry to overcome." ***Anne Wheeler '05, Government Major***

"The outcome of the election has a significant impact on next week's schedule. As of now we declined an invitation to streak the shit out of Laura Bush's "Back to the Ranch" pot unlucky supper next Wednesday in anticipation of attending the Heinz-Kerry estate party in Pennsylvania where Teresa will be taking a hot victory bath in #37, her favorite of the 57 varieties of ketchup and the turn tables will be blazing for a special edition of Janet Reno's Dance Party with honored guest Mondo McCloskey." ***Pete Holzaepfel '05, captain of the Varsity Streaking Team***

Adventures in D.C.

Jonathan Kuhl '06
I&I WRITER

As someone who follows politics like most people follow sports, I spent last semester glued to the tiny television set in my Dunham single watching as the primaries unfolded on CNN. This semester, however, things have been different. As part of the Washington Program, I have been lucky enough to spend the months leading up to the presidential election in the center of the action. Having been asked to share what the experience of being in DC has been like, I figured that the best approach would be to share some of the highlights from the last few weeks.

Interning in Senator Charles Schumer's office, I often find myself jealously going through the many invitations that Senators are routinely sent. As one of my jobs is to RSVP the events that the Senator can't make, I came across an invitation to attend the premiere of Alexandra Pelosi's (daughter of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi) new film, *Diary of a Political Tourist*. Figuring that I had nothing to lose (it's not like they're paying me), I couldn't resist asking if I could attend in the Senator's place- the Senator's scheduler said yes, and I was placed on the guest list.

The premiere was held in one of nicest hotels in Washington, and although there was no red carpet, the ballroom was filled with all kinds of press and cameras. The documentary (she followed around all the Democrats who ran for president this past year and asked them funny questions), which aired on HBO earlier this month, was great, but the scene was even better. Surrounded by the social elite of Washington (Senators, Congressmen, reporters, rich people, etc.), it was one of those times where you keep waiting for someone to ask you what you're doing there. Plus, there was an open bar.

On a less glamorous scale, I was also fortunate to attend the final concert of the "Vote for Change" tour. Taking place in Washington's MCI center (think Madison Square Garden, but a little smaller), the tour featured acts from Bruce Springsteen, Dave Matthews, R.E.M., Pearl Jam, John Mellencamp, the Dixie Chicks, James Taylor, and a few others (for $65, few concerts compare). While not overly partisan, all the musicians did say a few words in support of Kerry- even the concerts in DC are political.

Moving right along, a few weekends ago I took advantage of a DNC sponsored trip to North Carolina to campaign for Senate candidate Erskine Bowles (one of President Clinton's Chiefs-of Staff). While walking from door to door handing out campaign leaflets in several strange neighborhoods may not be the ideal way to spend a Saturday, it felt good to actually contribute something beyond my opinions. It was also great to see how devoted people from literally all over the country are to making sure the Democrats take back the Senate.

Back in Washington, my second internship is at CNN, where I work for the *Capital Gang* (Saturday nights from 7-8). It's a great place to work, regardless of the slightly demeaning task of pushing the wheelchair bound journalist Robert Novak around the studio (he is the recent recipient of a new hip). Beyond my geriatric-related duties, I have also had the opportunity to meet some of the show's famous (at least in the political world) guests. While bringing someone up from the lobby to the green room may not make for the most intimate of conversations, I have been able to briefly chat with the likes of Joe Lockhart (former Clinton Press Secretary, and current Kerry aide), and Ken Mehlman (Bush's campaign manager). As November 2nd draws closer, I am also increasingly excited about the thought of spending Election Day in the studio- it's going to be a close one!

While an intern is a far cry from the top of the social hierarchy of Washington, there is something to be said for the fly on the wall experience that being in DC during this heated campaign season has afforded me.

Time for a needed change

by Bill Chenevert '05
I&I WRITER

So Britten asked me if I were interested in writing something for this special Election pullout. Now, I'm not sure what to write about (I'm no political activist but I wholeheartedly admire my Hamilton peers who are), but I have some ideas. I would like to liken this election, touted as one of the most important in our history, to the World Series of baseball. I'm a Sox fan, and a Kerry fan, and I'm going to maintain my optimism both in October baseball and in the Democratic party until I'm proven wrong.

So, why do I want Kerry to win? I'm not going to use this lesser of two evils logic because I don't like to hear people compare this election to choosing which foot to cut off. I like Kerry as a candidate for his articulate criticisms of the Bush administration; not necessarily because I have strong feelings about the Bush administration's stances on issues but merely because he's willing to be critical of the president in a new age of Americans being constantly supportive of our president in all his actions. Flag waving, magnetic yellow ribbons on cars and Fox TV seems to have whipped our nation's population into a fervor of blind faith in and fear of global terrorism that might not be as ominous as they have been led to believe.

Madeline Albright was on The Daily Show last night and she somehow managed to put things in perspective for this election. She explained that, as a Secretary of State, it is frowned upon and against protocol for the current Secretary of State or current National Security Advisor (Condi Rice), or any other current cabinet members for that matter, to campaign for their President in an election year because, ha!, maybe they should be working on diplomacy or national security. Albright is campaigning for Kerry but as a former Secretary of State. This just solidified certain hunches I had about the Bush administration - they're very media-focused and savvy at manipulating the public and taking advantage of their lack of awareness on certain standards of behavior. But seriously, what if Bush wins? What am I going to do with myself? I might just go live in France. Anybody wanna go sit in Parisian cafes and talk with Frenchies about how much Bush stinks?

I don't like what Bush does with regards to human rights. An amendment that would actually take away the rights of homosexuals, an unprecedented low in American government (right?), has no place in our constitution. Madame Albright also spoke to the lack of respect in the global community America has earned; everyone's asking "What are they doing over there?" I believe John Kerry will improve our global standing as a fair and reasonable nation. Lastly, I really don't like how Bush and his administration have spent millions of dollars on a negative campaign that slams Kerry for 'flip-flopping' and other such nonsense. Our country needs to wake up and realize that our current president is not an untouchable - in fact he stands to be criticized and scrutinized.

Luckily, at the time of this writing, the Sox stand poised for a World Series victory (2-0 in the 7 game series). I don't trust many polls but they seem to favor Bush; but like I said, I'm staying optimistic. Vote for Kerry if you want more respect in our greater global community, if you want a more sophisticated approach to the war on terrorism, if you want a more reasonable war on drugs that doesn't punish small-time perpetrators with huge prison sentences; vote for Kerry if you want more attention paid to domestic issues like education and health care than the Bush administration (No Child Left Behind is not the success the Republican party will tell you it is); vote for Kerry if you want to see things change or go in a different direction, because our country needs some things to change now.

Debates, the CPD, and Third-Party candidates

by Adam Polonski '08
I&I WRITER

On October 9, 2004, two U.S. Presidential candidates were arrested. Yeah, you heard me right: arrested. As in, thrown in jail. And do you know why? Because they were trying to exercise their right to free speech. Sort of.

October 9th was the second presidential debate, by the way. And you probably haven't heard of either candidate/arrestee—Michael Badnarik of the Libertarian Party and David Cobb of the Green (note the absence of Nader). The reason for the arrest? The pair tried to cross the police barriers protecting the debate center at Washington University, bearing papers demanding that they be allowed to participate in the debate. Police stopped their crossing, and the two surrendered easily (want more details? See www.badnarik.org).

This unfortunate incident raises a number of questions. The most obvious: why did Badnarik and Cobb care enough to try this, even though the end result was hardly a surprise, and hardly beneficial? Answer me this: how many of you have heard of either of them, or of any Presidential candidate besides Bush, Kerry, and Nader? Not many of you? That's what I thought. How many of you would know of them if they had participated in a national televised debate? A whole lot more. If third-party candidates were allowed to participate in debates, they would have almost as much name-recognition as, say, Nader or Perot.

Perot, you will note, was the only third-party candidate ever allowed to participate in the official debates run by the Commission for Presidential Debates (CPD). That's because the CPD has (tin-foil hat time!), as its agenda, the maintenance of the two-party system. Former heads of both parties play prominent roles in the Commission, and their requirements for participation in the debates, while not draconian, still do effectively exclude almost all third-party candidates: to stand on the stage, they must be on the ballot in enough states to theoretically win an electoral majority, and also be polling at least 15% in national polls.

This is not inherently unreasonable. Some restrictions are certainly needed; we don't want random megalomaniacs running as write-ins to be on the stage. But we also want legitimate candidates to have a legitimate chance—and at the moment, they don't. Now, you might say that that's because their ideas don't have broad popular appeal. And that is true. But the reason they don't have that appeal is very simple—the masses simply don't know about them. If (for example) they could participate in the debates, virtually everyone who pays any attention *would* know about them—not just because of the debates themselves, but because of the media coverage that would go with being in them. They might get, gasp, actual airtime and be able to build popular support. They certainly don't get any now—aside from an AP wire story, the mainstream news didn't mention this incident at all. That's because nobody would know who they were talking about—and that's because third party candidates receive minimal publicity, partly because of exclusion from debates (and partly because they don't have the ridiculous amounts of money that Dems and Repubs can throw at their campaigns).

Sure, there are a few exceptions. Last time around, everybody knew about Nader, although he played no part in the debates. But that's because the media *made* everyone know about Nader, possibly because he was a lunatic and everyone loved to gossip about him. But what about semi-mainstream candidates? Cobb snatched Nader's Green party nomination away from him (since he doesn't have a reputation as an election-stealer), and Badnarik is, well, a Libertarian. They aren't mainstream, but they aren't communists or fascists, either.

And for many Americans, they represent a viable alternative—something that the traditional two parties no longer provide. On June 2, an Onion headline quipped, "Many Americans Still Unsure Whom To Vote Against." Sadly enough, this is true—for many, this election is about choosing the lesser of two evils. The third party candidates may be what they truly want. But, because they are largely unknown to the public (and for other even more important reasons—especially the Electoral College), the poor yet idealistic third-parties have, as we all know, not a chance of victory—a vote for Badnarik is a vote wasted, especially in swing states. And those discontent with the two-party status quo have no real hope of seeing it changed.

Now, not all of this can be blamed on the CPD. Not all of it can be blamed on the two-party system, either. But I daresay that nothing short of a revolution, either in war or in ideology, or the total collapse of one of the parties (which would BE a revolution), could bring a third-party candidate into the Oval Office. And it's not even because their ideas are radical—it's because they are unknown, and cannot become known.

It's because, here in the land of the free, they get arrested for trying to participate in the presidential debates.

Representing our values

*from **Character**, page 8*

strong global community is also important.

John Kerry has pledged that he will rectify the mistakes made by George W. Bush in terms of foreign policy. Kerry has promised that he will restore America's relations with allies and regenerate a global community through a change in our war on Iraq. But talk is cheap. Our forces are committed in Iraq and that cannot be denied. The U.S. military needs to be allowed to train Iraqi forces. Our efforts will have been worth nothing if Iraq merely turns into a present-day Vietnam. A drastic change in military policy could severely demoralize both American and Iraqi troops and restore hope to the very forces the American troops are fighting. Just like Bush failed to maintain quality relations with the global community, it seems likely that Kerry will fail to put up a strong and determined front for American policy.

Besides these issues in foreign policy, both candidates lack the charisma and flair that commands respect. Bush has made it pretty clear in his campaign and the debates that he would rather be certain than right. Bush has proved himself to be a stubborn and stick to your guns kind of guy, in many ways not a bad thing, but Bush needs to realize that it is acceptable to change one's actions or policies in light of new information and intelligence. A respectable and successful leader is one that is able to adapt to changing situations and is able to learn from his past mistakes. On the other hand, Kerry has shown himself to be less than focused. Believe me, I find the "flip-flop" accusations of the Bush campaign annoying, but Kerry does not seem to have the drive and intensity that a world leader needs. It is easy for him to criticize the leadership of George W. Bush but he only shows flashes of his own leadership. Bush is right when he says that other world leaders will not respect or follow a U.S. President that does not show determination and resolve.

The fact is, the United States is in a very precarious position on the global scale. We need to place ourselves back in a position of global leadership and global respect. It is up to us, the voters; to determine who can puts us back on this path. Vote for who can do the best and hope for a day when a truly great candidate rises up... which will be about fourteen years from now. I'm 21.

Aye!

-Voting for something other than your favorite beer

- Not having to move to Canada

- Candidates with actual military experience...that's as opposed to *pretend* military experience

- VT, DE, DC, ND, SD, MT, WY... 3 votes strong!

- Regime change

- Jon Stewart for President

Nay!

- Jeb Bush

- The outdated institution that is the Electoral College

- Piles of hanging chads... what, we couldn't fix this in 4 years!?!

- Abstaining (unless you're a Republican)

- Swing States: are you *really* better off than you were 4 years ago?

by Hilary King '05 and Justin Thompson-Tucker '05

Eh?

- Poland!!!!

- The possibility of G.W. as President and John Edwards as VP... no really, it could happen. Read your Constitution.

- People who vote for Badnarik

- Mary Cheney. For more information, check johnkerry.com

- People who object to our aye's, nay's and eh's

Volume XXXXV Number 8

The Spectator

Special Election Coverage: Insights & Ideas

PHOTO BY BOBBY COLE '06

Students gather at the Chapel for the mock debate.

The lesser of evils

by Britten Chase '05
I&I EDITOR

Four years later. One terrorist attack, two olympics, two wars, three unseated govenors, two wars, and 18 billion hours of 24 hour news later we finally made it.

Whew.

First off, give yourselves a nice pat on the back. Politics in the last four years has been...well...hellish. But the final showdown will be Tuesday, and regardless of the outcome we can finally unite behind one leader for a good 20 minutes.

Friends, I have to be honest. I am very depressed about this. This is what happens when you have an election that comes down to the guy-with-bad-ideas against the guy-with-no-ideas-but-at-least-he's-not-the-guy-with-bad-ideas.

The advantage of the two party election system is that it breaks things down so they're real simple. Black or white. With us or against us. No middle groud. In fact, there is seemingly only one flaw, and that is we tend to run the risk of both candidates sucking so much that you don't want either of them.

Let me see if I can explain my beef with a two-party system using a gas station as a metaphor. See, it's kind of like when you pull in to get gas, but when you stop your car you are too far away from the pump. The hose doesn't reach you. But this is where you are. Why should you have to change where you are and move closer to the pump? Why can't there be a pump with your values and your ideals and unleaded gas that is closer to you? Why change your position at this gas pump? Because it's anchored where it is and doesn't seem to be doing anything for you.

You're probably thinking to yourself one of two things. Either, "Self, that didn't make any sense at all." Or, more likely you are thinking, "Self, why can't Brit just learn how to drive?"

That's not the point. The point is in this day and age I have to adujust my views in order to fit with some cookie-cutter candidate running for office. Say I was for a constitutional amendment banning gay marraige but also for a woman's right to choose. Who do I vote for?

Why, the lesser of two evils, of course!

And for me that will be Kerry. I really wish I was voting for something more than simply kicking Bush out of office. I'm sorry. Bush is just really bad. Sure he has values and all, in which case he gets life points, but please not another term as president. Foreign policy is screwed over in Iraq. Domestic policies are full of doublespeak (read: "patriot act," and "healthy forest inititative") in order to confuse the average American, or they are grossly inadequate and underfunded (read: No Child Left Behind), or they seem good (tax cut), but they make everyone worse off in the long run (read: broke states, no money for counterterrorism essentials, no money for superfund, etc).

And I know that there are some of you out there who are still going to vote for him. To which I can only say two wrongs do not make a right. Seriously. Once was amusing. No lockbox. We got the point. Now you're gonna go do the same thing again? Twice is...you know...ridiculous.

But again, I am not psyched about Kerry. My confidence sank a bit more when I did what he told me to do (checked out johnkerry.com) and looked up his plan for social security. The bad news is he has no plan, the good news is that if you do he's all ears.

Big sigh. I suppose the good news is that this election is going to be so bitterly contested that the chances of us having a clear winner on the morning of November 3 are slim to none. Which means more of...well...the same...for longer.

Fun.

I think.

Smart politics, strong character

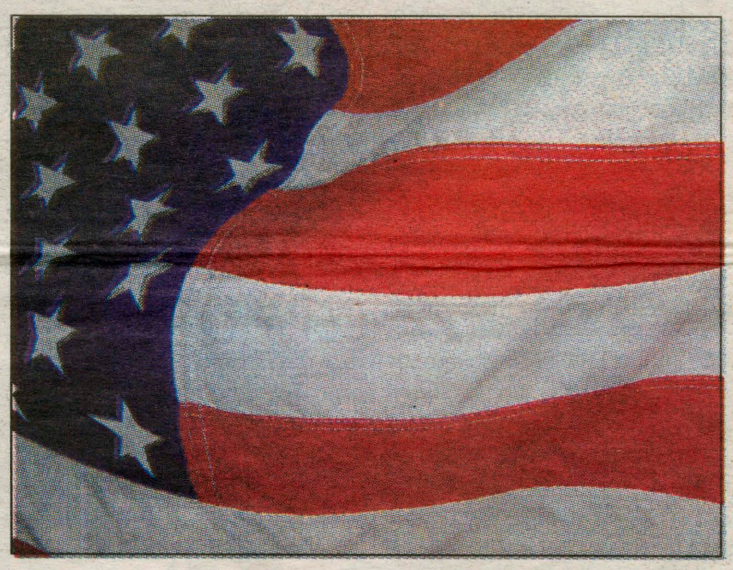
by Blake Erb '05
I&I WRITER

With the Presidential Election rapidly approaching, more and more people are deciding on who the best candidate is. Many consider this election to be one of the more important presidential elections in recent history because of what is at stake. The war on terror and Iraq, environmental issues, economic issues and other things are all reaching critical points that demand strong and able leadership from the United States government. Whoever wins the election in November, be it George W. Bush or John Kerry, will be faced with a monumental task, a task that will require smart politics but also strong character.

Now, anyone who has watched the debates or paid attention to the news knows the different policies and agendas that the two main candidates wish to pursue if they are elected into the American presidency. As I am not a savvy political analyst or egg-head intellectual, I shall deny myself the pleasure of criticizing the specific policies the two candidates have planned for the future. Besides the influence on American policy, another major duty of the President is to stand as a figurehead of American ideals and identity. This role as a figurehead is what I shall discuss.

My own perceptions of the two candidates tell me that neither of them is an impressive representation of America. Bush has obviously alienated many of America's allies and pursued an aggressive foreign policy that breaks from American tradition. Despite the fact that I agree with the war in Iraq on some levels does not blind me to the fact that Bush did not do all in his power to prevent violence in Iraq. This type of pre-emptive violence makes America seem like it is making a "land-grab", an action taken to satisfy economic and political needs. Whatever the real reasons behind Bush's decision, this is a perception that many non-Americans can easily have. This type of negative reaction to American policies is unhealthy for America and the world as a whole. As the leader of a superpower nation, the President of the United States needs to be perceived as a determined individual that is committed to not only making the United States a better country but also the whole world a better place. Fighting and ultimately eliminating terror may do this, but one cannot ignore that creating and nurturing a

*see **Character**, page 7*



Drawing Criticism by Tom Booth '06